

THE WAQF TRADITION IN CYPRUS

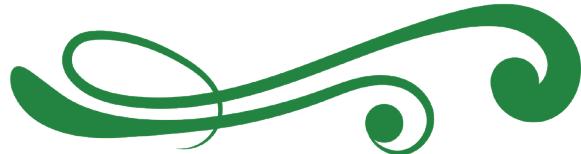


CYPRUS EUKAF ADMINISTRATION

“Your compassion will bring compassion.”

Ibn Hanbel, Hadith

THE WAQF TRADITION IN CYPRUS





**Engravings. The Cyprus Evkaf Administration Archive
Inner Page Photos:**

The Foundation Tradition in Cyprus, 2008, 1st Edition

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration Archive

**Cyprus Evkaf Administration
11-13 Kyrenia St. P.O. Box 118**

**Year of Publication
2025**

Contents

History of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration	06
The Cyprus Evkaf Administration Brings History to the Present Day	12
The Historical and Cultural Heritage of Cyprus	18
«Ahkâmü'l-Evkaf, The Regulations of Waqfs» at the Service of Researchers	19
Restoration Works	20
Selimiye Mosque	22
The Dükkanlar önü Mosque	23
Grand Turkish Bath	24
Sultan Mahmut II Library	25
Bedesten	26
Bilal Ağa Masjid and Cultural Center	27
Tuzla Mosque and Bath	30
Arnavut Mosque	30
Malya Martyrdom	31
Zuhuri Mosque and Tomb	31
Waqfs in the Service of Education	32
Scholarships	33
Evkaf Kindness Volunteers Team	34
Media Outlets	35
Sport Teams of Waqfs	36
Tourism Facilities & Banking	37
Nationwide Social Solidarity Network	38





The Cyprus Evkaf Administration (EVKAF) continues to be an important milestone for the Cypriot community in its historical journey of more than 450 years, which started with the conquest of Cyprus by the Ottomans in 1571.

During this time, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration continues to set an example in society and act as a guardian of our cultural heritage—heritage that bears witness to the history of humanity. It does so by maintaining various immovable properties donated by our ancestors years ago for the benefit of society, humanity, and other living beings, and by spending all the income generated from these properties on charitable causes, a tradition that continues to this day.

This small booklet, which presents a brief history of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration along with its current mission and functions, aims to highlight the point we have reached as of 2025.

The history of this island, located in the heart of the Mediterranean, is an integral part of human history. Inspired by this legacy and with a commitment to preserving the heritage of Cyprus, we have compiled a selection of the patterns that form the cultural mosaic and traditional fabric of the island. Recognizing the significant role of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration in safeguarding and restoring this small yet valuable piece of the mosaic, we take pride in updating this booklet and sharing it with you, our readers.

**Prof. Dr. Mustafa Tümer
Director General**



HISTORY OF THE CYPRUS EVKAF ADMINISTRATION

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration has a deep-rooted history. The dedicated efforts carried out in its historic buildings preserve a legacy of more than 450 years and support important projects to ensure the continuity of this tradition through its current activities. The Cyprus Evkaf Administration represents the collective memory, cultural richness, and social waqfs of the Turkish Cypriot community.

To speak of the history of the Evkaf Administration—shaped by the social and political developments on the island—is, in a sense, to speak of the history of the Turkish Cypriots themselves. Following the Ottoman Empire's conquest of Cyprus in 1571, the Muslim-Turkish population settled on the island, bringing with them, among other traditions, the institution of waqf.

The waqf system, which played a central role during the Ottoman era, encompassed a wide range of public services. It allowed philanthropists to establish and endow institutions and structures—such as schools, madrasahs, libraries, hospitals, aqueducts, orphanages, bridges, roads, and guesthouses—that were directly accessible to the public.





In 1915, the British revised the Turkish representative, established a new system of administration, appointed one Turkish and one British delegate.

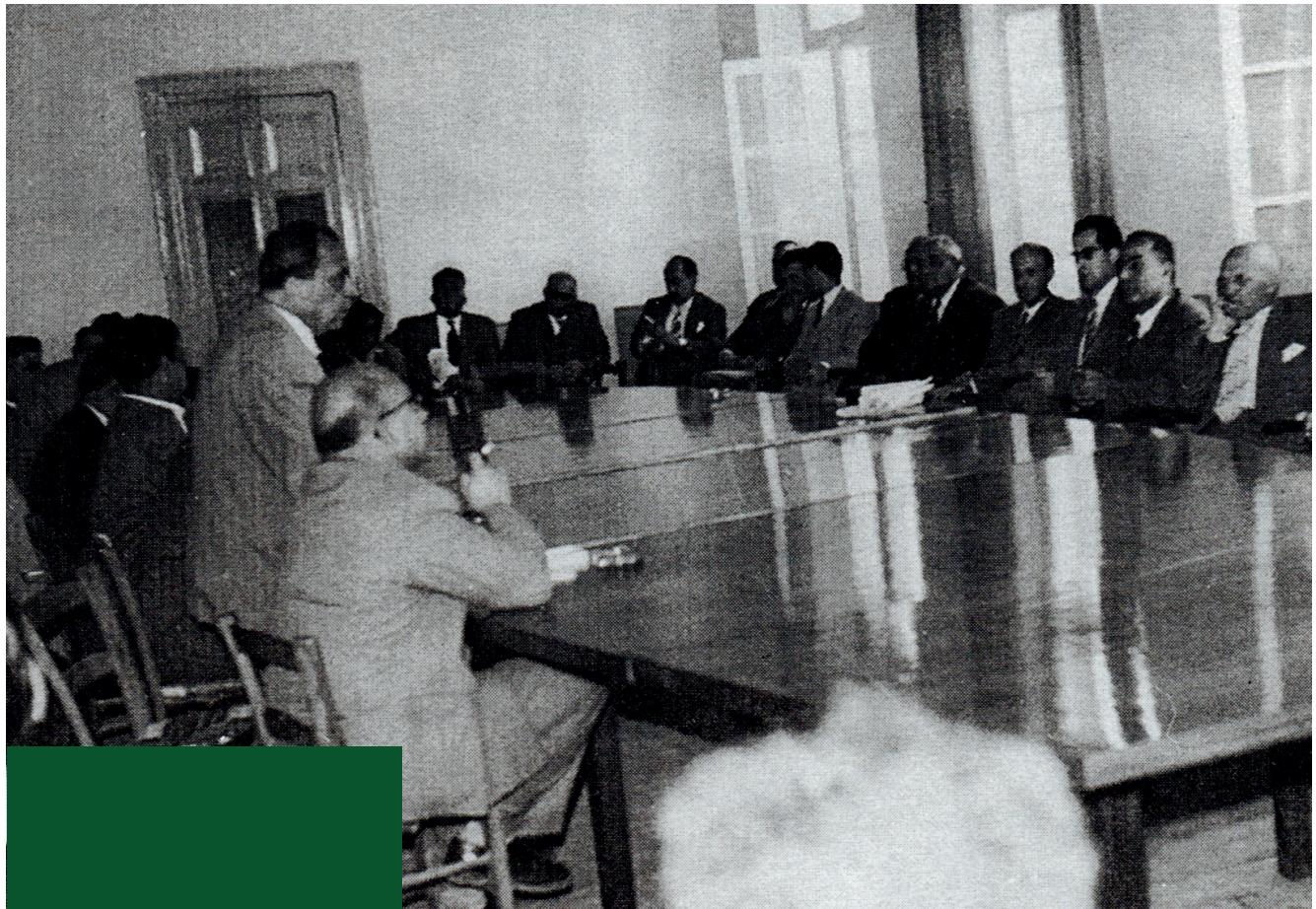
Following the alliance agreement of Cyprus by the Ottoman Empire to the British Administration, changes were also made to the organization of the Evkaf Administration. Under the new arrangement, the waqfs were governed by a representative elected from among the Turkish Cypriots and a delegate appointed by the British Administration. However, this model was short-lived. In 1915, the British abolished the position of the Turkish representative, established a new administrative system, and appointed one Turkish and one British delegate.

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration continues its activities to meet social requirements in the period that passes until its return to Turkish Cypriots.

These activities include financing the building of schools and teacher salaries, undertaking the building of new mosques and the repair of existing mosques, providing grants for students, supporting tradesmen and villagers by providing loans and organizing Islamic law courts.

The waqfs transferred to the Turkish society on 15 April 1956.





The main mission of the waqfs is to institutionalize the sentiment of social solidarity and support.

Following the transfer of the Waqfs to the Turkish Cypriots society on 15 April 1956, new laws are drawn up which add to the religious and social duties of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration, including new economical duties comprising the right to undertake financial, commercial, industrial and agricultural ventures, to found enterprises and to participate in existing enterprises and companies.

The struggle for waqfs was long and hard, but steady as well, and runs parallel to the Turkish Cypriot people's struggle for democracy and justice.

The waqf tradition reinforces the basis of social solidarity by opening paths to the sharing of personal property and the presentation of private goods to the public good. The main mission of the waqfs is to institutionalize the sentiment of social solidarity and support.

As the most important actor representing and therefore reinforcing the social, economic and cultural presence of the Turkish Cypriot people on the island, the Waqfs continue their existence by presenting religious services and also services in line with the requirements and needs of social order.





THE CYPRUS EVKAF ADMINISTRATION BRINGS HISTORY TO THE PRESENT DAY

Today, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration undertakes a range of important responsibilities—from restoring centuries-old historical monuments to establishing modern educational and tourism enterprises, from rehabilitating historical legal records to meeting the basic needs and requirements of citizens.

**The Cyprus Evkaf
Administration is recognized
throughout the world
in its own field as a
strong institution for its
power of international
representation.**

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration is one of the two institutions with «internationally recognized status» in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and has since its founding in 1571 not only assumed the duty of the protection and development of the economic, cultural and social rights of the Turkish community in Cyprus, but it is also recognized throughout the world in its own field as a strong institution for its power of international representation.

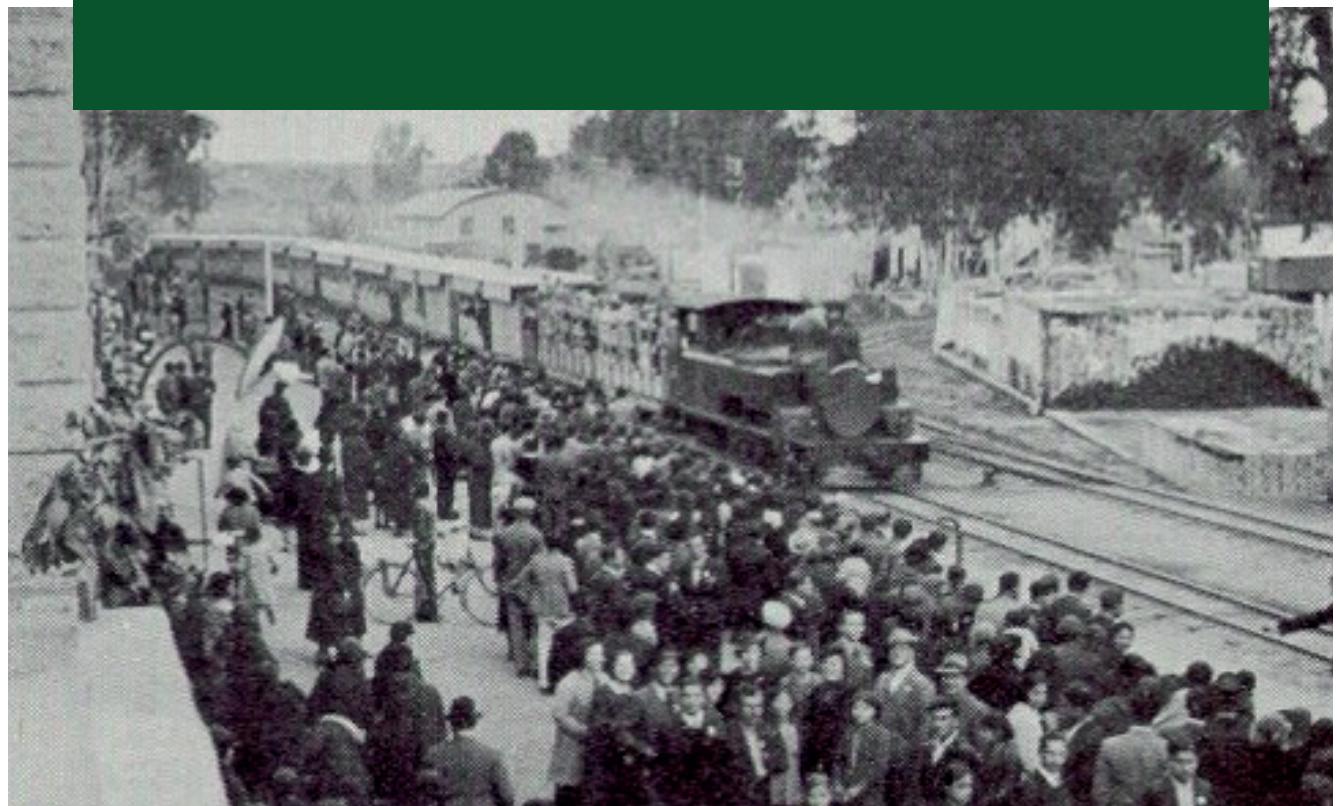




The waqfs become some form of «common memory» where the registry of all subjects on the Island, whether Muslim-Turkish, Greek, Armenian or from other religions and sects and all forms of commercial, legal and social life, is held and all types of property relationships are secured under a certain jurisdiction.

With this system, which is the memory and treasure of all Turkish Cypriots from past to present, all registers kept from the waqf until now, all buildings built and all investments realized by the state and the community, assume the quality of a document transmitted to the future through the mediation of the waqfs; in other words, the waqfs have been the symbol, the document and the evidence of Turkish existence in Cyprus.

Although the common view is that it is a «historical register» institution or an institution which «renovates old buildings» and «presents religious services» in truth, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration is a very significant institution which connects past and present, present and future of the society, provides continuity and both physically and morally embodies the ideal of unity, solidarity and living together.



The waqfs assume the responsibility of preserving the vast majority of historical buildings under conditions which allow them to be conveyed to future generations, and are the greatest support for the land policy of the Turkish community in Cyprus today.



The Cyprus Evkaf Administration provides financial grants and food and clothing for individuals in need, like elderly, children and the poor, and students who have difficulty in continuing their studies due to the inadequacy of their material conditions; and it also extends a helping hand to establishments such as primary schools, rest homes and children's homes both to support the existence of this type of establishment and to reach many people in need at once.



The Cyprus Evkaf Administration has served an important duty by entering into collaboration with various international institutions and establishments in order to convey the historical and cultural heritage both to the present day and to future generations through the preservation and renovation work it continues to realize.

THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CYPRUS



The most comprehensive and outstanding work carried out by the Cyprus Evkaf Administration for the preservation of historical records was undoubtedly of the 450 years old registry book documenting the Ottoman presence in Cyprus, using scientific methods.

The project, which aimed to preserve the deeds of trust of waqfs established by the Ottoman State in Cyprus, as well as the register books maintained by the Office of the Qadi (Kadı) of Cyprus, and to make them accessible to researchers, was carried out with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Nicosia and in collaboration with the Society of Turkish Archivists.

Thousands of documents, books and registers, kept under unsuitable conditions and abandoned to the ravages of time until now, have been placed under protection using scientific methods, with the support of the Nicosia Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye and the collaboration of the Society of Turkish Archivists. The said documents were restored with the intense effort of hundred and fifty experts over a period of two years, classified and summarized in today's Turkish and digitized in microfilm. This Project has made this magnificent historical treasure available to researchers who want to study the history of Cyprus.

The legal records dating back over 450 years, restored by the Cyprus Evkaf Administration and summarized in modern Turkish and made available to researchers, constitute the most important documents of the «collective memory».



AHKÂMÜ'L EVKAF

THE REGULATIONS OF WAQFS AT THE SERVICE OF RESEARCHERS

Another project carried out by the Cyprus Evkaf Administration has been the translation of «Ahkâmü'l Evkaf - The Regulations of Waqfs» edited in 1890 by Jurist Ömer Hilmi Efendi, into today's Turkish. These regulations are an important reference source since they from basis of Waqfs Law and Principles and they have been presented since 2003 to the use of researchers with the efforts of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration.



RESTORATION WORKS

For a long time, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration has been carrying out important work in collaboration with various international establishments in order to project important historical and cultural artefacts in Cyprus and to render them functional. Historical buildings on the verge of collapse, abandoned to their fate, are presented once again to the service of society with the efforts of attentive hands.

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration, in collaboration with various institutions and establishments, pioneers the renovation of important architectural works in Cyprus in conformity with their originals. In Cyprus, there is significant cooperation in the protection of cultural heritage in both the Northern and Southern parts.

Restoration works of mosques, churches, cemeteries and other historical buildings carried out by the Cyprus Evkaf Administration are carried out under the supervision of the Cultural Heritage Committee and with the financial support of the European Union.

These projects are implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Nicosia, the Presidency of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and the Prime Ministry of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The aim of these restoration efforts is to protect significant religious and historical structures that reflect the cultural diversity of Cyprus. This cooperation holds great significance for all communities on the island, helping to preserve cultural heritage and pass it on to future generations.

Real estate is an important source of income for the waqf. We have added value to our properties through maintenance, repairs, and renovations—especially in key buildings where our tenants reside.



RESTORATION WORKS IN NORTH CYPRUS





Selimiye Mosque

The Selimiye Mosque is one of the most important historical monuments in Cyprus.

The restoration of the Selimiye Mosque—the oldest and largest Gothic structure in Nicosia—was initiated by the Republic of Türkiye and is ongoing in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

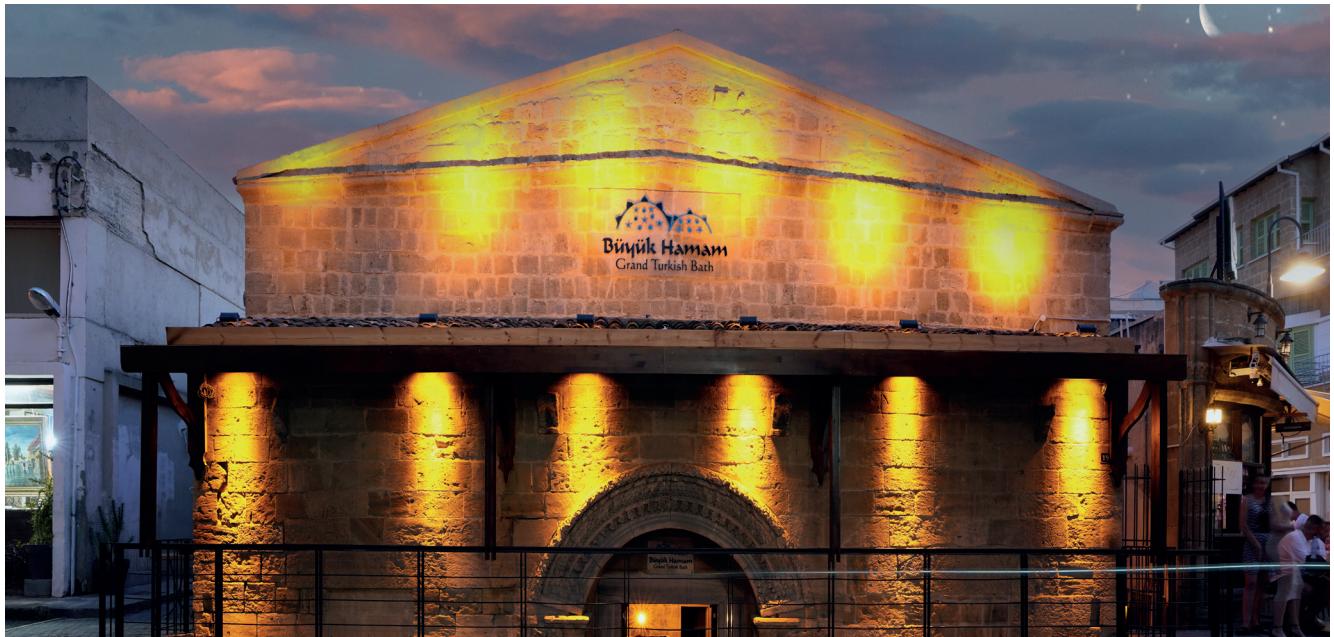
***The
oldest
and
largest
gothic
structure
in Nicosia***

The Dükkanlar önü Mosque

The Dükkanlar önü Mosque was built in 1816 and belongs to the Seyyid Mehmet Emin Efendi İbni Es Seyyid Hacı Mehmet Waqf. It was a symbol of Nicosia in ancient times but became unusable after being

demolished in the 1960s. Thanks to the contributions of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration, it was restored in accordance with its original and historical structure.





Grand Turkish Bath

The Grand Turkish Bath in Nicosia, built between 1571 and 1590, stands out as one of the rare Ottoman-period structures that have survived to the present day. It also attracts attention with the moon and stars adorning its dome.

Under the leadership of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration, the bath underwent a comprehensive restoration between 2008 and 2010. It has preserved its historical character and function, and upon reopening, it continues to offer modern services to its visitors while maintaining its original magnificence.





Sultan Mahmut II Library

The building, the first official library established through state-citizen cooperation and located in the Selimiye district of Nicosia, was built in 1829 by Ali Ruhi, the Governor of Cyprus during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II.

It features a single dome, with its portico crowned by two smaller domes.

Constructed from cut stone, the building displays classical architectural features.

On the outer walls of the north, south, and west sides, the inscription «Mashallah» can be found, while the entrance door bears the inscription «Fiha kütübün kayyime», which means 'It contains correct and authentic books' in Arabic.



Bedesten

*A kind of marketplace in the Ottoman Empire,
now a cultural center*

The Bedesten is a historic building located right next to the Selimiye Mosque in Nicosia. While a church was originally built on this site in the 6th century, the current Bedesten structure was constructed as a

larger church between the 12th and 16th centuries. During the Ottoman period, it was repurposed as a bedesten—a type of covered marketplace. Today, it serves as a cultural center.



Bilal Ağa Masjid and Cultural Center

According to the Evkaf archive records, the Bilal Ağa Waqf was established on February 14, 1821, under the name Bilal Ağa Bin Hasan Ağa Waqf. The land belonging to the Bilal Ağa Waqf in Marash (Varosha) includes 7 shops, 2 coffee houses, 1 house, 1 room, and 1 toilet.

Following the reopening of Closed Marash (Varosha) to visitors in 2020, the Bilal Ağa Masjid underwent a comprehensive restoration. As of 2024, the areas comprising the Bilal Ağa Masjid, Evkaf Cafe, and exhibition space have been opened to visitors.

It is a crime against humanity to remove the waqf status of a property.



CLOSED MARASH (VAROSHA)



Restoration Works in Southern Cyprus





Arnavut Mosque

The Arnavut Mosque in Limassol, located in Southern Cyprus, stands at the corner of the intersection formerly known as Masjid and Yıldız streets. It is estimated to have been built around 1900.

Tuzla Mosque and Bath

The Ottoman bath located in Larnaca-Tuzla is one of the authentic examples of traditional Ottoman bath architecture.

With the financial support of the European Union (EU) and technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the conservation work on this culturally significant bath was completed and it is now open to visitors.

The bathhouse, a landmark in Cyprus, had been out of use since the 1950s when the city's water infrastructure was expanded to serve every house in Larnaca. Following its restoration, the bath has been repurposed to preserve cultural heritage and now serves as a historical site open to the public.

The fez-shaped tombstone in front of the mosque's entrance belongs to Bodamyalızade Hakkı Efendi, who funded the construction of a school and donated it to the people of Limassol.

Although the tombstone was originally located in the old Turkish cemetery until 1960, it was moved to the Arnavut Mosque by the mosque's imam, Hüseyin Cümbезli, after the cemetery was dispersed for various reasons.



Malya Martyrdom

Malya Martyrdom, which is under the administration of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus and has deteriorated over the years, was restored through the cooperation of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration, the Martyrs' Families and Disabled Veterans Association, and the Cultural Heritage Technical Committee.

The Martyrs' Families and Disabled Veterans Association, supported financially by Evkaf, carried out its first restoration work as part of a long-term project aimed at renewing the martyrs' cemeteries in Southern Cyprus. Within this project, the graves at Malya Martyrdom were repaired and the surrounding landscaping was completed.



Zuhuri Mosque and Tomb

One of the landmarks reflecting the rich history and cultural heritage of Cyprus is the Zuhuri Mosque and Tomb in Larnaca.

As part of the "Supporting Cultural Heritage Monuments of Great Importance in Cyprus" project, financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCHH), with additional support from the European Union (EU), conservation work at the Zuhuri Tomb in Larnaca has been completed.

Waqfs in the Service of Education

Education has become an important sector in Cyprus, and the Cyprus Evkaf Administration actively organizes activities in this field. The European University of Lefke was founded by the Cyprus Science Waqf in 1989 and began its academic programs in 1990. Continuous collaborations with domestic and



international universities have contributed significantly to its remarkable development.

Today, the European University of Lefke is an international institution with over three thousand students from more than thirty-five countries, supported by distinguished and experienced academic staff from around the world.

Iskele Evkaf Turkish Maarif College, completed through the cooperation of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration and the Ministry of National Education and Culture, officially opened on September 3, 2021.

Located in the Iskele region with the goal of educating future generations, the school building includes 13 classrooms, language and information technology rooms, and a cafeteria.



Scholarships



During the Ottoman period, waqfs provided scholarships to students to encourage education and aimed to offer educational opportunities to various segments of society.

Today, waqfs continue this tradition by offering scholarships to students at all levels, from primary education to university.

In this context, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration also provides scholarship opportunities to successful students in need.

The *Evkaf Champion Angels Scholarship*, launched in 2023 in cooperation with the Cyprus Evkaf Administration and the Association for Keeping Champion Angels Alive, continues to support high-achieving students who require financial assistance.

Educational support is provided to students enrolled at Eastern Mediterranean University, Girne American University, European University of Lefke, and Near East University.



Evkaf Kindness Volunteers Team

The Kindness Volunteers Team was established in 2018 with the primary goal of promoting and preserving human and spiritual values. Its mission is to carry out beneficial actions for people, animals, nature, and society. In this context, and based on its historical mission, reviving and sustaining the 'waqf culture' is considered its most important duty.

As confirmed by official records, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration—owner of approximately 35% of the island's land—has established 2,220 different waqfs. The Kindness Team operates with this guiding principle in all areas of its work. Activities may be conducted in specific regions or island-wide, depending on the scope of the initiative.

Media Outlets

The Newspaper of Goodness and Culture, established as the official publication of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration, began its publishing life in September 2016.

Published regularly each month, the newspaper features news and stories about initiatives that benefit people, animals, nature, and society, coordinated by the Cyprus Evkaf Administration's Kindness Volunteers Team.

A yearly summary of these activities is also compiled and published in the Kindness Yearbook.

Scan and read our latest publications



EUKAF | Newspaper of Goodness and Culture
Be relevant so that you may be tolerated.
Year 2024 - Issue 131

EVKAF | Newspaper of Goodness and Culture
Your companion
January

Grand Turkish Bath

THE PEARL OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: GRAND TURKISH BATH

Kindness Volunteers Paid Visits to Little Hearts

Evkaf Champion Angels Scholarship Were Given to Grantees

The Ottoman Empire and Cyprus: Monetary Foundations

Newspaper of Goodness and Culture

On The Trail of Time

Cyprus Evkaf Administration Building

The building, which was used as a court building and a calif mansion during the Ottoman Empire and is known as "Kaza" or "Mahfil-i Ser-i Muthahhar" in the archive records, is currently being used as the headquarters building of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration.

2023
Evkaf İyilik Yılı

452 YILLIK GELENEĞİMİZİ YAŞATIYORUZ.

KIBRIS VAKİFLAR İDARESİ

EVKAF İYİLİK GÖNÜLLÜ LÜFLERİ

Kindness Yearbook



Sport Teams of Waqfs

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration has taken a leadership role not only in the economic and social spheres but also in the field of sports. The Waqfs Sports Club, which has made significant contributions to sports in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), began its operations in 1985.

Initially active in various sports disciplines, the club later specialized in volleyball and went on to win numerous championships. The club continues to operate successfully with both men's and women's

volleyball teams.

The Waqfs Wheelchair Basketball Team also proudly represents our country in national and international competitions.



Tourism Facilities & Banking



*Kibris
Vakiflar Bankasi*

Tourism Facilities

For many years, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration has made significant contributions to the country's tourism sector through its hotels—including the Dome Hotel, Grand Pasha Saray Hotel, Mare Monte Hotel, and View Hotel. Over time, the administration withdrew from direct tourism management and began leasing its facilities to private operators. By offering long-term leases of strategically important and high-value properties to investors, the Cyprus Evkaf Administration has helped boost the country's tourism accommodation capacity. Additionally, many cultural assets owned by the Cyprus Evkaf Administration also serve as attractions that contribute to tourism.

Trust and Stability in Banking

Founded on July 22, 1983, Cyprus Vakiflar Bank Ltd., which provides services with its branches scattered in various cities of the island, constitutes one of the important income and service bases of the Cyprus Evkaf Administration.



View Hotel



Grand Pasha Saray Hotel



Dome Hotel



Mare Monte Hotel



Nationwide Social Solidarity Network

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration brings together a vast network of waqfs under its umbrella. These include both contemporary and classical waqfs that serve various societal needs and are managed and supervised by the Administration. While some classical waqfs are directly managed by the Cyprus Evkaf Administration, others are overseen by their respective boards of trustees

The Cyprus Evkaf Administration supports those in need

While the Cyprus Evkaf Administration continues its efforts to preserve the concept of “philanthropy,” which has been passed down through generations and is considered the core purpose of waqfs, it is successfully channeling the income it generates to those in need.

In addition to providing financial, clothing, and food aid to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, the poor, and students facing financial difficulties in continuing their education, the Administration also supports institutions like primary schools, nursing homes, and children’s dormitories to help sustain their operations. These efforts enable the Administration to reach and assist a large number of people in need simultaneously.

“

Your compassion
will bring
compassion.

”

Ibn Hanbel, Hadith



CYPRUS EUKAF ADMINISTRATION

Address: 1-13 Kyrenia St. P.O. Box 118, Nicosia, TRNC **Phone:** +90 392 444 04 94
email: evkaf@evkaf.net **website:** www.evkaf.org